

## Chris O'Brien

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**From:** kira neel <kiraneel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 13, 2021 7:56 AM  
**To:** House Finance Committee  
**Subject:** testimony in support of Budget Article 12 Section 12d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act.

April 13, 2021  
Dear Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Budget Article 12 Section 12d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act. I am writing as a primary care provider in Pawtucket, RI providing prenatal, obstetric, postpartum, and newborn care in addition to primary care for many families who would be positively impacted by this bill and access to doula services. This budget article and bill are crucial to improving the health and safety of pregnant individuals, particularly Black and Brown families. The families I care for have some of the worst maternal child health outcomes in the state associated with their zipcodes. No matter what statistical odds they face, all of the families I care for are excited, terrified, exhausted, in love with their new child(ren), and desperate to learn how to care for their child(ren) and themselves.

A doula is a non-medical professional trained in pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum transitions who provides emotional, physical, and informational support to a person who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. A doula's purpose is to help people have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience. Investing in doulas for any pregnant person who wants it has the potential to create ripple effects for generations. Research has shown that the presence of doulas at births has impacts that can ripple through families and by extension, communities, for generations. For example, the presence of doulas at birth can lead to higher rates of breastfeeding, which in turn improves infant-parent bonding, is associated with lower rates of postpartum depression, and lowers infection rates in children in their first months and years. This is just one example of how doulas can contribute to healthier, stronger families, particularly for families who most need support.

This bill has been crafted collaboratively by doulas, birthing families, community organizers, doula advocates, and legislators. Please support the bill which reflects the ongoing input of these key stakeholders, and has the potential to begin to transform maternal child health in our state.

Thank you,  
Kira Neel, MD  
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